and that the dividend warrants are despatched within 3-6 weeks of declaration of dividend. However, there are delays mainly in the case of death claims, largely because of the time taken by the beneficiaries to comply with procedures that are necessary to safeguard the interests of investors and to establish the bonafides of the claimants. After the completion of all formalities, cases are normally settled within a fortnight.

With a view to minimising the delays, the UTI is progressively decentralising the despatch of dividend warrants and repurchase facilities to the Branch level; implementing a technology upgradation project involving an on-line computer system networked across different centres through telecommunication links; and setting up a captive UTI Investor Services Ltd.

Destroying Ganja Plants in Western Ghats

*400. SHRI MISA R. GANESAN:

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of ganja plants that were destroyed by the joint operation of NCB and police in the forests of the Western Ghats during the last three years, year-wise;

(b) what is the estimated market value of the plants in the Indian market and also in the international market;

(c) what is the amount of expenditure that was incurred for the joint operation during the above period year-wise;

(d) whether any operation raids have been conducted this year, if so, what are the details thereof including the estimated plants destroyed, number of days of operation, the number of personnel deployed in the operation;

(e) whether Government are aware that unemployed youth and poverty striken pepper cultivators in the Western Ghats are increasingly resorting to gania cultivation for survival; and

(f) whether Government have drawn up any plant to provide alternate vocation to these vulnerable sections and dissuade them from ganja cultivation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a) During the period one joint operation for destruction of cannabis (from which ganja is produced) plants in the hilly regions of the Western Ghats was carried out jointly by Narcotics Control Bureau and police in the State of Tamil Nadu on 30-1-90. The total number of plants destroyed during the operation was about 1,62,480.

(b) No precise valuation of narcotics, often of indeterminate purity and liable for destruction, is feasible.

(c) Rs. 2625/- were spent on hired labour for the operation in the year 1990.

(d) No joint operations have been conducted this year.

(e) No such specific information has been received.

(f) This pertains to the State Governments but a large number of antipoverty schemes are operational to improve the economic and social status of the poor.

Decline in the Costs of Telecommunications Operations

3625. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA:

SHRI RANJAN PRASAD YADAV:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that costs in telecommunication operations and equipment have declined; and

(b) if so, on what rationalisation has Government raised the telecom tariff payable by consumers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) The overall cost